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The Book Club of California

QUARTERLY NEWS-LETTER

Richard-Gabriel Rummonds: A Veronese Printer

by John V. Richardson, Jr.*

TO COLLECTORS of pressbooks, Verona has long been known as *la città degli stampatori a mano*, the city of hand printers. This northern Italian city on the Fiume Adige can boast of no fewer than eight hand printers: the eminent, though recently deceased Giovanni Mardersteig and his Officina Bodoni, the *bibliotecario* Franco Riva and his Editiones Domenicae, Renzo Sommaruga and his press by the same name, Jacques Verniere and his Belacqua Presse (now re-established in Paris), Alessandro Corubolo and Gino Castiglioni and their press by the same name, Mark Fishbein and his Stamperia Ponte Pietra, and Richard-Gabriel Rummonds and his Plain Wrapper Press. Among these, the first two are well-known to pressbook collectors¹ and, of course, some of the others are regularly listed in *Private Press Books*; but the latter printer, in particular, should be singled out and examined in the light of his contribution to the artistic genre of *le livre d'artiste*.

Rummonds's printing today is a logical outgrowth of his peculiarly personal combination of literary, artistic, and aesthetic qualities; and reasonably enough, these had to be developed and refined over time. A nar-

* Dr. Richardson is an Assistant Professor in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at UCLA. His scholarly interests include the history of handpress printing and bibliography.

tive Californian, he began developing his literary sensibilities in the early 1950s with *Occident*, Berkeley's student literary magazine.² While at Berkeley, he came to admire Cora C. Fletcher and Jack Spicer, whose texts he has published under the Plain Wrapper imprint. The former, a literary hoax, caused his expulsion from Berkeley.³ Next he utilized his artistic abilities as a successful industrial designer of table accessories for Fraser's/Berkeley during the late '50s and in New York with his own clients (who included WMF, Noritaki, and Johnson Brothers) during the early '60s.

Rummonds's naturally tansured nut-brown hair belies some several years spent in a monastery in South America. It was during his contemplative time there that his enthusiasm and devotion to an ideal were translated into printing. In his own words, "I came to printing through writing and started the press in Quito, Ecuador, in '66 by publishing some of my own poetry, which I distributed privately among friends. The idea of printing books for public distribution did not occur to me until after I had seen the marvelous collection of press books in Dr. Armando Braun Menéndez's library in Buenos Aires in '67. This was the crucial factor in my decision to print seriously."⁴

Following this formative period Rummonds returned to New York City, working successively with Random House and then Alfred A. Knopf as a senior book designer in an effort to study bookmaking first hand. His efforts should have been personally satisfying for it was during this time that he designed several award-winning books including C. P. Cavafy's *Passions and Ancient Days* (free-lanced for the Dial Press in 1971). Concurrently he was collecting his own printing equipment and teaching himself to use it by reading printer's manuals like Moxon's *Mechanick Exercises on the Whole Art of Printing* and Allen's *Printing with the Handpress*. At the culmination of this second period, he left New York for Verona to establish his Plain Wrapper Press (PWP) on a full time basis. An R. Hoe & Company's Washington handpress (No. 2215, circa 1847), formerly owned by the illustrator Joseph Low, went with him.

Rummonds is now an expatriate American – not unlike the expatriate German printers who preceded him by five hundred years. In 1975, one could visit with him in his studio apartment at 15 Via Duomo, only a few

doors from the cathedral, a fourteenth-century Gothic structure with a choir and Romanesque facade dating from the twelfth century. Then, one would have found the following: beyond the entryway and inside his apartment, one rather small room served as Rummonds's library. Of course, among the books there are many related to the history of printing, but there are also the books he designed himself, for example Karl Shapiro's *White-Haired Lover* (included in the American Institute of Graphic Art's *Fifty Books*, 1968). Adjacent to the library was the pressroom with a large window looking out into the *cortile*. In the center of the room stood the Washington handpress. His handpress is large; necessarily so, for the large-format books produced at the PWP. Its Number 5 platen measures 64 x 89 centimeters and the bed, of course, is still larger. The press was rescued from a small West Virginia village newspaper shop and seems destined to be used by affectionate hands. One of Rummonds's customs at the press is to kiss its wood-encased arm at the completion of a press run. Around the wall were a Poco proof press and a type cabinet which Rummonds designed. Of the latter, he has said, "My type cases are basically California job cases with an extra row on the cap side between the lower case and the caps. I use this for sorts and for the brasses and coppers. Each bank has a separate set of drawers for accented letters."⁵ A desk, several counters with storage below, and a large standing press for dampened paper completed his work area, a somewhat Spartan environment for "books in so rich a form."

Since 1975, Rummonds has expanded his facilities to include a small bindery near the Fiume Adige and in 1977 "a new studio for the press near Piazza Bra [site of the Arena constructed under Diocletian circa 290 A.D. and the finest example of a Roman coliseum north of Rome] – much more space and a delightful little garden."⁶ The purchase of another handpress will complete these new arrangements. Rummonds has recently written that "along with the physical expansion of the facilities, the personnel of the press was increased in 1976 when [I] was joined by Alessandro Zanella. Zanella, who is now a full partner, received his training at the press. What was once a personal press is now a working community of hand printers and binders which includes temporary work/study students."⁷

At this point, perhaps a word by way of explanation is necessary regarding the name of the press. Prior to the first book printed in Verona (*Images & Footsteps*, 1971), three books were issued. It was these to which the name of the press literally applied, for they were bound simply in either brown Kraft paper wrappers or brown Canson paper-covered boards. The figurative connotations of the press name may apply to such activities of the press as its keepsake series. Since these "plain wrapper" days, the press has struck out in a new direction — *le livre d'artiste*.

The first effort, *Images & Footsteps*, was quite a significant step in that direction. Quarter bound by Alessandro Galvagni in green leather with yellow-green, laid Fabriano Ingres paper-covered boards and matching Fabriano Ingres slipcase, it follows the true Veronese style. The text, a poem in nine stanzas by Paul Zweig, originally appeared in the *Hudson Review* 21 (Summer, 1968) as "The Bicycle Odyssey." The text is handset in Horizon Light, a modern Bodoni face, and is accompanied by five etchings by the Danish artist Berta Moltke. The edition of two hundred includes fifty copies not for sale, all of which are numbered in type and printed on sized white wove Fabriano Umbria handmade paper. The etchings were pulled by Luciano Cristini, who has collaborated on several books with the press. *Images & Footsteps* is signed by both author and artist.

This book represents Rummonds's first serious attempt at presenting the *livre d'artiste*. As Breon Mitchell stated: "Illustration has often been considered the stepchild of literature, a second-rate art form which at best lamely retells a story in pictures. But along with the more immediately apparent twentieth-century revolutions in the plastic arts, music, and literature, a quiet but equally profound alteration has taken place in the world of illustrated books."⁸ Rummonds is part of this twentieth-century revolution combining elements of traditionalism and experimentation. In a newsletter from the Plain Wrapper Press, Rummonds states: "My aim is to publish interesting and beautiful books by contemporary authors and artists utilizing the basic artisan techniques of the past coupled with modern typographic skills."⁹ In terms of technique, he has mastered the same hard-learned principles of an Emery Walker and is more than a careful printer; he is a fine printer. Stanley Morison could easily be speaking of Rummonds in his *Four Centuries*: "the fine printer begins where the careful printer has left off. For

'fine' printing something is required in addition to care – certain vital gifts of the mind and understanding. Fine printing may be described as the product of a lively and seasoned intelligence working with carefully chosen type, ink and paper."¹⁰ According to Rummonds, with these three elements, book design is basically "a set of aesthetic decisions."

The work of the PWP is engaging for Rummonds but not to the point that he does not have time during the afternoon for cappuccino. Indeed, at the customary hours of the day he can most probably be found at a sidewalk cafe in Piazza Erbe, which is usually filled with tourists on their way to the Casa di Giulietta. On a similar occasion back in New York City, such a situation spawned a book. Rummonds relates:

In early '68 I had breakfast with Jorge Luis Borges who was in New York on a visit. We discussed the possibility of doing a book together, and before the end of the year he sent me the manuscript for *Siete Poemas Sajones / Seven Saxon Poems*. This undertaking was by far my most ambitious project. The type had been set up for more than two years, and the book had been on and off the press at least a dozen times. Alone in '72 hundreds of proofs were pulled without the book going into actual production. It started out as a relatively simple book, but by the time it was finished, it had become an artistic synthesis requiring the collaboration of a team of artists and artisans with highly individual temperaments.¹¹

Rummonds traveled widely researching for the Borges book. In particular he traveled to France "looking for the right paper; I eventually found it at the Richard de Bas Mill in Ambert. Even the tiniest detail, such as the color and weight of the headbands, involved extended research and effort."¹²

Completed in December 1974, the *Siete Poemas Sajones* is certainly a Book Beautiful. In 1976 it was the recipient of the coveted European award for fine printing, the Premio Internazionale Diano Marina which was established in 1967 (and so named for a town near San Remo).¹³ The awards committee included the late Franco Russoli, director of the Brera Museum in Milano; Remi de Cnodder, a Belgian art critic; and Giovanni Scheiller, an Italian publisher, to mention a few. The book's forty-page text in Spanish and English, with foreword and notes by the author and printer respectively, is set in Horizon Light and printed on cream Richard de Bas handmade paper. The text is complemented by eight blind-embossed impressions by the noted Italian sculptor Arnaldo Pomodoro;

these appear in different positions on each leaf and thereby relate closely to the text. The book is bound in handsome, full natural parchment (from black sheep from Sardinia) with brown Canson endpapers. Incidentally, they had to wait two years to obtain enough parchment to bind the edition. Set into the cover are three low-relief gold-plated bronzes, also by Pomodoro. Enclosing the book is a light brown, silk-covered wooden box with an etched brass plate by Pomodoro measuring approximately 40 by 30 centimeters. All the binding was done by Marcello Fornaro in Ronca, a small town outside of Verona. It ultimately sold for \$2,400 and is now out of print.

Golda Fishbein, a close friend of Rummonds from Random House days who now lives in Verona, hand-lettered the title page which was then printed from a line cut. She also designed the new calligraphic pressmark which was used for the first time in the Borges book. The pressmark is reminiscent of an earlier one belonging to Jean Alexandre of Anger (fl. 1485–1500s).¹⁴ It is composed of an oval and medial bar similar to the Greek letter *theta*, and extending vertically from it is an old-style figure 4. According to Rudolf Koch, the “theta” is an ancient symbol which stands for the “passive female element” but Rummonds maintains that it symbolizes the Washington handpress: the oval represents the bed and platen of the press. The piston, chill, bar and arm, often referred to as a “figure 4” in the literature of the iron press, are stylized in the top portion of the pressmark. The brushstroke acronym “PW” was employed as the pressmark prior to 1974.

Clearly, it is too early to speak of the Borges book as Rummonds’s *magnum opus*; his latest book is a collaboration between Anthony Burgess and Joe Tilson. The result is a previously unpublished short story written by Burgess expressly for the PWP entitled *Will and Testament*; William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson are the main characters in a plot to blow up King James I. Joe Tilson has created “eight screen prints and a container in wood embellished with wood burnings and hand coloring for an edition of 86 signed copies. It will be another expensive book.”¹⁵ Presently it lists for \$1,300. The Burgess/Tilson book, which was published in December 1977, is in keeping with Rummonds’s role as a facilitator – “a printer and publisher of books in limited editions illustrated with original graphics . . . by internationally known artists.”¹⁶

Among the printer's recent activities was a visiting lectureship at the Graduate School of Library Service of the University of Alabama during a return visit in the spring of 1977. This resulted in his appointment as an adjunct professor to teach one semester every other year and to develop a book arts program there. In 1978 Rummonds conducted a summer workshop, "Printing and Publishing on the Handpress," in Verona through Alabama's Continuing Education Program. The five-week course allowed students to plan and produce a limited edition handpress item and to see some unusual collections of pressbooks in Verona as well as visit printing and paper museums in northern Italy.

Finally, collectors should expect even better items in the future. According to Rummonds's latest prospectus, another half-dozen works are now in progress. Prospective patrons of the press may have heard Rummonds speak in March of 1977 or may have seen his books at the following booksellers: Argus Books in Sacramento, Monk Bretton in Toronto, Brentano's in New York, Bertram Rota in London, or Robert Krauthammer in Zurich. And of course "visitors are always welcome at the Press at 6 Via Carlo Canttaneo in Verona."

In what may be regarded as his apologia, Rummonds has said, "I brought to [printing] only my personal sense of aesthetics combined with an overflowing amount of energy and enthusiasm in the hope that my efforts would have lasting merit both in contents and craftsmanship."¹⁷ The results of this revolution in *le livre d'artiste* clearly have lasting merit; this is a handpress to watch.

NOTES

1. Readers interested in the recent history of the Italian book might profitably consult Franco Riva, *Il Libro Italiano; Saggio Storico Tecnico 1800-1965* (Milano: V. Scheiwiller, 1966).

2. Richard played several roles for the *Occident*: advertising manager, Fall 1950; manager, Spring 1951; editorial board member, Spring 1953; and editor, Spring 1954. His contributions as an author were (under the nom de plume Denise More) "The Green Lift," pp. 49-55, Fall 1950; "The Little Boy in the Bell Glass," pp. [41-44], Spring 1951; "Mrs. Bebe Bear and the Announcing Angel's Egg," pp. 14-15, Spring 1953; and (under the nom de plume Cora C. Fletcher) "The Emperor's Lion," pp. 2-4, Spring 1954.

3. Cora C. Fletcher, *The Emperor's Lion*. Quartus Series. Verona: Plain Wrapper Press, 1976, p. [5]. "The eventual discovery of the 'hoax' was sufficient for the Dean of Men to ask for the perpetrator's withdrawal from the University, whereupon I found myself without a college degree. In the twenty-two years since, I have done many things which never seemed to require one." Jack Spicer, on the other hand, was real enough; he was, among other things, an instructor in history at the California School of Fine Arts, San Francisco.
4. Richard-Gabriel Rummonds, *A Checklist of Books Printed by Richard-Gabriel Rummonds at the Plain Wrapper Press 1966-1972*. (Verona, Italy: Plain Wrapper Press, 1973), p. [1].
5. Richard-Gabriel Rummonds to Richardson, 11 September 1976.
6. Rummonds to Richardson, 8 February 1978.
7. Rummonds to Richardson, [30] August 1979.
8. Breon Mitchell, *Beyond Illustration: The Livre d'Artiste in the Twentieth Century*. (Bloomington: The Lilly Library, 1976), p.5.
9. Richard-Gabriel Rummonds, *Plain Wrapper Press Newsletter: One*. (Verona, Italy: Plain Wrapper Press, December 1974), p.3.
10. Stanley Morison, *Four Centuries of Fine Printing*. 4th ed. (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1960), p. 11.
11. Rummonds, *Checklist*, p. [10].
12. Rummonds, *Plain Wrapper Press Newsletter*, p. [13].
13. A similar laudatory review by Anthony Rota appeared in *Fine Print: A Review for the Arts of the Book*. III, 1. (January 1977): 7-9.
14. M-Louis Polain, *Marques des Imprimeurs et Libraires en France au XV^e Siecle*. (Paris: Editions E. Proz, 1926) p. 3.
15. Rummonds to Richardson, 13 July 1976.
16. Prospectus from Plain Wrapper Press. *Hand-printed Limited Editions*. Verona, Italy [Spring 1976] p. [3].
17. Rummonds, *Checklist*, p. [2].

CHRONOLOGICAL CHECKLIST OF THE PLAIN WRAPPER PRESS,
1966 - 1978

- [1] *Eight Parting Poems*, by Richard Rummonds. English and Spanish text. 14.5 x 20 cm. 16 pages. 35 copies. Quito, Ecuador. 1966. Keepsake Series.
- [2] 1945 - 1965, by Richard Rummonds, with a linecut of a pen-and-ink drawing by Allen Tate. English text. 15 x 20 cm. 84 pages. 32 copies. Buenos Aires, Argentina. July 1967. Keepsake Series.

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- [3] *The Dog Bite*, by Barton Lidice Benes, with twenty linocuts by the author. English text. 25 x 33 cm. 21 french-folded sheets. 150 copies. New York. 1970. Press Book Series.
- [4] *Images & Footsteps*, by Paul Zweig, with five etchings by Berta Moltke. English text. 25.5 x 33 cm. 28 pages. 200 copies. Verona. 1971. Press Book Series.
- [5] *Ten Poems & Ten Reflections*, by Max D'Arpini and Bruno Corridori, with a linocut by Ger Van Dijck and a woodcut by Mirek. Italian text. 17 x 24 cm. 52 pages. 80 copies July 1971. Press Book Series.
- [6] *Le Streghe*, by Mirek, with five linocuts by the author. Italian and English text. 22 x 20 cm. 7 folded sheets. 81 copies. January 1972. Press Book Series.
- [7] *Ballata della Madri*, by Pier Paolo Pasolini, with nine etchings by Giuseppi Banchieri, Giovanni Cappelli, Agenore Fabbri, et al. Italian text 32.5 x 45.5 cm. 12 folded sheets. 172 copies. February 1972. Press Book Series.
- [8] *Some Things From Jack*, by Jack Spicer, with a linocut by Mirek. English text. 16.5 x 25.5 cm. 12 pages. 91 copies. Spring 1972. Keepsake Series.
- [9] *Didascalie*, by Antonio Gammaro, with two etchings by Piero Mancini. Italian text. 19 x 28 cm. 30 pages. 99 copies. September 1972. Press Book Series.
- [10] *Poesia dal Tappeto Volante*, by Alessandro Mozzambani, with a screenprint by Rodolfo Arico and a lithograph by Bernard Cohen. Italian text. 35 x 50.5 cm. 6 folded sheets. 50 copies. October 1972. Press Book Series.
- [11] *The Ill-time Lover*, by Richard-Gabriel Rummonds, with an etching by Brooks Walker. English text. 14.5 x 20.5 cm. 8 pages. 6 copies. December 1972. Keepsake Series.
- [12] *Tre Poesie D'Amore*, by Antonio Gammaro, with an etching by Giordano Zorzi. Italian text. 16.5 x 25.5 cm. 8 pages. 140 copies. Christmas 1972. Keepsake Series.
- [13] *A Checklist of Books Printed by Richard-Gabriel Rummonds at the Plain Wrapper Press 1966-1972*, by Richard-Gabriel Rummonds. 16.5 x 11.5 cm. [23] pages. 1973.
- [14] *Pronto Soccorso*, by Gabriel Rummonds, Jacques Verniere, Alitche, et al, with an etching by Pucci De Rossi. English, Italian, and French text. 20.5 x 28.5 cm. 16 pages. 120 copies. March 1973. Keepsake Series.
- [15] *Siete Poemas Sajones/Seven Saxon Poems*, by Jorge Luis Borges, embellished by Arnaldo Pomodoro. Spanish and English text. 29 x 39 cm. 40 pages. 120 copies. December 7, 1974. Deluxe Boxed Book Series.
- [16] *A Lost Poem*, by Jack Spicer, with two etchings by Ariel. English text. 24.5 x 33.5 cm. 8 pages. 114 copies. December 1974. Quatus Series.
- [17] *Plain Wrapper Press Newsletter: One*, by Gabriel Rummonds. 17.5 x 11.5 cm. [9] pages, folded. December 1974.
- [18] *Three Poems of Passion*, by C. P. Cavafy, with two intaglio prints of pen and ink

drawings by Ger Van Dijck. English text. 19.5 x 29 cm. 12 pages. 97 copies. May 1975. Keepsake Series.

[19] *Geographie du Regard*, by Laure Verniere, with an illustration by Jacques Verniere. French and English text. 29 x 19.5 cm. 48 pages. 71 copies. April 1975. Press Book Series.

[20] *The Emperor's Lion*, by Cora C. Fletcher, with an etching by Fulvio Testa. English text. 24.5 x 33.5 cm. 8 pages. 75 copies. August 1976. Quartus Series.

[21] *Plain Wrapper Press: Hand Printed Limited Editions*, by Gabriel Rummonds. 17.5 x 10 cm. [4] pages. 1976.

[22] *Will and Testament*, by Anthony Burgess, with eight screenprints by Joe Tilson. English text. 39 x 29 cm. 44 pages. 86 copies. December 1977. Deluxe Boxed Book Series.

[23] *Le Stagioni*, by Antonio Gammaro, with four linecuts of Holbein woodcuts. Italian text. 14 x 19 cm. 4 pages. 140 copies. December 1977. Keepsake Series.

[24] *A Christmas Recipe*, by Anthony Burgess, with a linecut of a pen and ink drawing by Fulvio Testa. English text. 15 x 24 cm. 1 french-folded sheet. 180 copies. Christmas 1977. Keepsake Series.

[25] *Six Printers' Mottos*. 14.5 x 20.5 cm. 1 french-folded sheet. 70 copies. September 1978. Keepsake Series.

TITLES IN PREPARATION

Stella Variabile, by Vittorio Sereni, illustrated by Ruggero Savinio. Italian text. Available only to Cento Amici del Libro members.

Circhi e Cene, by Andrea Zanzotto, illustrated by Joe Tilson. Italian and English text. Press Book Series.

La Donna con la Bocca Aperta, by Luigi Santucci, illustrated by Emilio Tadini. Italian and English text. Press Book Series.

Tallien: A Romance, by Frederic Tuten, illustrated by R. B. Kitaj. English text. Press Book Series.

Cantata de Bomarzo, by Manuel Munica Lainez, illustrated by Luciano De Vita. Spanish and English text. Deluxe Boxed Book Series.

Otello, by Giovanbattista Giraldo Cinthio.

California: Evolution of a Mythology

PART I

by Richard H. Dillon*

IMAGES AND MYTHS, legends, romance and illusions – what Carey McWilliams has called “the foretaste of actuality” – have all played roles as important as those of *bona fide* facts and events in the shaping of human behavior in the American West. As was the case with John C. Frémont’s adventures, even the great Lewis and Clark Expedition was most successful, most important, as drama. It confirmed the image of a Great West and the concept of a highway across it, a Passage to India, even though the Platte River and South Pass would have to be substituted for Jefferson’s original Missouri River route.

In fact, the West, from Daniel Boone to Manifest Destiny and on to Hetch Hetchy, is a product of the imagination in large part; of a set of images which has provided us with a national mythology. This is based on the truth of Professor Frederick Jackson Turner’s Frontier Hypothesis of American History. This thesis, originally an over-simplification of the major determinants of American character, has now been modified to take into account such other factors as immigration, urbanization, technology, and mythology itself.

Mythology is a kind of history in shorthand, when viewed in retrospect; emotional simplicities recording the desires, if not always the actions, of mankind. But it is also a motivator of conduct. Myth, in this context, does not mean distortion or error of belief, but simply the imagina-

* Mr. Dillon has recently retired as Librarian of the Sutro Library branch of the State Library. His *Images of Chinatown* was published by the Club in 1976 and he is a former President of the Club. Shortened versions of this paper were delivered as speeches by Mr. Dillon at an “Images of California” seminar of the Institute of Governmental Studies, UC Berkeley, and at a humanities workshop of the 1980 American Association for the Advancement of Science convention.

tive construction or delineation of things perceived. Henry Nash Smith described myth perfectly in his classic book, *Virgin Land*, as the constant interplay between the mind and the environment. This is so whether the former is busily working up supposed "facts" or flights of wild fantasy.

To be successful, an old myth should be grounded in fact, in reality, from *El Dorado* of the Spaniards to the modern California Dream of a Golden Land of opportunity. If there were no truth in the California legend, there would not have been successive migrations to (and only negligible flights from) the West Coast by '49ers; farmers, home builders, and land speculators during the Southern California boom of the '80s; health seekers; utopians; Dust Bowl refugees; and post-war technicians and engineers in the fields of aerospace and nuclear energy.

Nor would the majority of Californians themselves, both old and new, hold such an intense belief in the ethos of their homeland, as a very special place with a great destiny of its own. Stanford University President David Starr Jordan, who was particularly impressed by the stature and muscularity of young Californians when compared to American youth in general, put it very well, long ago: "The Californian loves his state because his state loves him, and he returns her love with a fierce affection that men of other regions are slow to understand." An anonymous pamphlet of Californians, Incorporated, titled *California, Where Life is Better*, explored the same vein in 1922. "If California seems legendary to her own sons, what must she seem to a distant stranger?" The little propaganda pamphlet, which recalls to mind the phrase "Out of the mouths of babes. . .," continued: "Why is a Californian? Why is there such a phenomenon? What is the vision he has seen to turn him into missionary, crusader, impassioned bearer of glad tidings to less-favored folk?" The pamphleteer had the answer to this question asked so often by nettled Easterners who were irked by the rhapsodies of praise sung by residents of the land of sunshine and flowers. The answer lay in the new scale of values and new sense of life held by Californians. "Seeing California's fertile valleys pour forth their almost incredible abundance, he loses his distrust of life, taps resources of confidence and enterprise that he scarcely knew he possessed. He dreams large, romantic dreams . . . and makes them come true before the eyes of an astonished world." Sizing up the typical Californian, the

unknown pamphleteer described him as the inheritor of a beautiful natural domain, a man rich in all the essentials of life. Happy, his psychology uncomplicated, he brags of California – but only because he wishes to share his good fortune with others. “And the strangest part about the gorgeous tales he tells is that almost all of them are true. . . .” With as much poetry as truth, the writer concluded, “Nature sets the key in which we play life’s music. . . . The rhythm of the warm earth and the blue sky possess you; you will become simple again, and you will love the taste of life.”

If this self-satisfying conviction of Californians is but an illusion, it has been a comforting one for more than a century now and it influences national and international patterns of behavior. California is seen to be in the van of progress, indeed, as a window on the future.

Although some are tenacious, like the anti-Spanish *Leyenda Negra* or Black Legend, false myths tend to fade away. One, for example, is the belief of Cornelius de Pauw and Georges Buffon that all life in the New World, including man, was biologically inferior to that of the Old World. This superiority complex was patently untrue and was soon discarded. But myths bearing a grain or a kernel of truth persist, living on to do battle with still other legends. Thus the old concept of a Great American Desert, centering in the High Plains, was given new life by the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, although a pair of rival themes had, seemingly, disposed of it years ago. One of these saw the Great Plains as a breadbasket, a Garden of the World. Its ally envisioned a Far West dominated not by lawless frontiersmen and savages, but by a benign, even beneficent, mountain-wilderness of surpassing grandeur, whose symbols were Yosemite and Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon. Both myths involved a romantic reverence for Nature which, among other things, converted the East’s Hudson River School of landscape painting into a Western (and national) phenomenon.

Most positive myths have opposition from counter-myths, thus the gloomy view of America held by Oliver Goldsmith as he saw his contemporaries entranced by the New World. He wrote of “Matted woods where birds forget to sing, But silent bats in drowsy clusters cling.” Possibly derived from the Irishman’s bad dream is the false and even silly Wild West of penny-dreadful and dime novel writers. To serve their own inflamed imaginations, as well as the craving for exotic ambience and the

lust for action-adventure by their readers, it was necessary for such hacks as Mayne Reid in England, Karl May in Germany, and Prentiss Ingraham in the U. S. to foist off a fake Far West. This land of palms, magnolias, and “date plums” stretched from the Upper Missouri of relentless sun and furious storms, to the howling, bloody-handed savages and ravenous beasts of further-on West, where alligators lurked in the deep pools of the Pecos and Gila Rivers. A vestigial remnant of this Fake West is the distressing cinema or “spaghetti” West of Hollywood and Cinecittá. And mere actors like John Wayne are actually confused in the public’s befuddled mind with the real McCoy whom they impersonate on film, the likes of Kit Carson and Billy the Kid.

Anti-California Dream tracts have been rare, probably because despair has always been overshadowed by hope, or faith, in California. Although the failure rate may be relatively low, Henry George, long ago, warned us about a fool’s paradise of golden apples. More recently, Carey McWilliams pronounced California to be neurotic, but he failed to add, however, that the whole world is neurotic these days, and paranoid to boot. If the fiction of Nathaniel West (*Day of the Locust*), Aldous Huxley (*After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*), and Evelyn Waugh (*The Loved One*), is excluded, probably the most widely-read debunking of the California daydream was Hinton Helper’s *Land of Gold* (1855), more appropriately re-titled *Dreadful California* by Lucius Beebe in his 1948 reprint edition. The disappointed Argonaut found overrated, “bankrupt” California to be a land cursed by drought, from the boggy San Joaquin Valley to the few arable vales which were scattered oases in a sahara. California was, thus, incapable of ever sustaining a large population. But even Helper was pleasantly surprised by the “vegetable monstrosities” from the few fertile patches of the sterile state – a 47-pound beet, a 32-pound cabbage, and a 26-pound turnip.

Two years before Helper, disillusioned George Payson had written his *Golden Dreams and Leaden Realities*, using the *nom de plume* of Ralph Raven. As late as 1897, Jannett B. Frost’s *California’s Curse* was published, but it referred more to social “ills” (drinking, stock gambling, the Chinese problem) than to any over-selling of climate and soil. So much for the nay sayers.

If historians could be mustered before us to argue the sectional identity of California, chances are that they would line up in opposing battalions of partisans. Is California part of the West? Or is it something else; *sui generis*, unique, as Dr. Rodman Paul believes and as George W. Payne suggested as long ago as 1871, with the title of his book on California's mines, farms, and ranches, *Beyond the West*? Opinion is divided. It may be unscientific to suggest that California is a bit of both, but many social scientists, historians, and humanists who examine it closely find this dichotomy (or schizophrenia) to be the case.

Only of late, building on Smith's more general *Virgin Land*, are we getting studies of the California mystique in such volumes as *The California Dream* (1968) by Dennis Hale and Jonathan Eisen, and in Kevin Starr's *Americans and the California Dream* (1969). But these books are rooted in portions of the early works of Henry George, Josiah Royce, Lord Bryce, and the more recent Carey McWilliams.

California is, and must remain, psychologically as well as geographically and politically, a part of the Far West. It is not merely a self-fulfilling prophecy of Eastern escapists. It has a life of its own. It is the leader of this section of the country, where its roots lie in a common frontier heritage. As Lord Bryce put it, "What America is to Europe, what Western America is to Eastern, that California is to the other western states." But its continued growth beyond the maturity of its early rivals and into the most advanced industrial and technological society on earth sets it apart. It is a junkyard of outmoded ideas, customs, mores, and styles, dragged overland by its immigrants, only to be traded in on something new. It is a state dominated by a voracious appetite for discovery, innovation, and improvisation.

At the same time, magnetic California as a regional society transcends the West in serving as a role model to the world for a life style based on leisure, rather than on the traditional work ethic. In this respect, along with its liberality and tolerance for radical departures, it has left the rest of the generally conservative and conventional West behind. It is, in this sense, once more the island that early map makers had depicted lying offshore.

California's split personality has persisted even though the state was

tied, psychologically as well as geographically, to the Union in 1869 by the transcontinental railroad. And even though technology, in the shape of jet air travel, has diminished the difference between California and the rest of the country at the same time that it demolished the distance between the two, Lord Bryce's 1889 assessment of California still serves: "The most striking [state] in the whole Union . . . , [with], more than any other, the character of a great country, capable of standing alone in the world. It has a superb climate, noble scenery, immense wealth in its fertile soil as well as its minerals and forests. Nature is nowhere more imposing, nor her beauties more varied."

Even Texas, with a giant mythos of its own, cannot rival California in its impact upon the world. But it is not just the latter state's great size and GNP which makes it distinctive. To see California by quantitative analysis, as a nation among states, instead of via qualitative appraisal, is to miss the point. California is neither a hybrid nor a sport. It is a natural, if extreme, result of a process. This is the development, and probable overdevelopment, of traditional legendary visions of the Old West as a land of unfettered freedom and of limitless opportunity. A century and a quarter ago, the options were in mining and agriculture; today or tomorrow they lie in space flight, computers, semi-conductors, or solar power. All along, California has been the destination not only of drifters and failures seeking a second chance, but of ambitious and dissatisfied questioners and doers, searching for the right climate for personal growth.

Mythical California is not a fraudulent California, but a visionary appreciation of the state – something like the distinction between magnetic north and true north. The symbolism of California is no aberration, for all of its cults and fads, caused by the metaphorical tipping of North America so that everything loose in the way of kooks, loonies, and crazies has rolled into the state's extreme corners, Los Angeles and San Francisco. It is a lot more than a dustbin for misfits. It is the land of the culmination of the eternal European-American dream of a promised land. Like it or not, California is an ideal, a goal, for the rest of the country. Hence the motto on the state's own escutcheon – "*Eureka!*" (I have found it!) Also the subtle distinction to be made by a wandering Indiana Hoosier who may choose to go "*back East*" or to head "*out West.*"

California is neither a religious promised land in the Judeo-Christian tradition nor a Buddhist Nirvana. Rather, it is a temporal place of beauty, rest, and ease – combined with opportunity for profit by its “reborn” immigrants. In a poetic or utopian sense, it is akin to the Never Never Land of the South Seas, of balmy latitudes, a place in the sun, easy living – but always with the get-rich-quick hang-over from the Gold Rush.

A self-selecting process propelled thousands of reckless young men into a race for riches, a speculation, a gamble. Relatively few women, children, or oldsters came. It was not an orderly procession from a neighboring territory, but a confused crusade for adventure and wealth. The Argonauts of 1849 had to want very much to come, and they had to be willing to cut ties with family and community, even those who at first considered themselves to be only temporary sojourners in the Far West. The result today is social fragmentation in California and the absence of traditions of privilege and even of authority. This is reflected particularly in our roaming population, and in our chaotic politics, where celebrities or stars, displaced from their Hollywood element, mean more than programs and party planks. But, as Carey and Wilson McWilliams have said, it has also produced California’s singular genius for adaptation and improvisation in social creativity.

Acceptance of the California myth has been easy, for America itself, from the first, was a place of marvels. Perhaps F. Scott Fitzgerald, of all incongruous people, best caught the sense of excitement of the early vision of America. In *The Great Gatsby* he wrote, “Man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.”

Earlier, another major American writer had made a similar point; but this time about the West in particular, rather than America in general. Hamlin Garland wrote in the preface to one of his novels, *Jason Edwards* (1891), that “Long before the days of ’49, the West had become the Golden West, the land of wealth and freedom and happiness. All of the associations called up by the spoken word, ‘the West’, were fabulous, mythic, hopeful.”

The terrestrial paradise had always been located somewhere toward

the warmth of hope remaining in the setting sun. There, according to a melancholy Bishop George Berkeley, the course of empire was also taking its way. The pursuit of, or escape to, this rainbow's end has ever been westward, from Europe to Jamestown and Plymouth, from the Cumberland Gap to the Big Muddy and the Sierra Nevada. It ended, miraculously, not in a swamp or a desert but in an arcadia of sorts, a somewhat flawed eden at the continent's very edge, California. The earthly paradise *had* to be there; that was where the land finally ran out. (A rocky point of westernmost San Francisco dramatizes the finality of it with a new, grim, meaning since the Golden Gate Bridge became the suicide span for the minority to whom the California Dream has proved to be a nightmare. The point is called Land's End. Only a few seekers, relatively speaking, who "lit out" for the Farthest West, followed their dreams and great expectations all the way to Hawaii. The majority had to be content to start to live all over again here in California.

There are as many reasons for California's idyllic myth eclipsing the parent legend of the Old West in general as there are pieces to the mosaic of legendry which is California. The metes and bounds of reality and fable are particularly hard to chart on the map of mythic California. They blur, they overlap, they sometimes coincide. The West of the Great Plains and Rockies has also been more satisfied with a static tradition, one of mountain men and cowboys and Indians. California's early appetite for change has carried it far beyond the wild and wooly stage, where Mother Lode mining camps equated with the trail herds of Texas cattlemen, and John Sutter and Black Bart were the opposite numbers of, say, Brigham Young and Wild Bill Hickok.

One obvious reason for the strength of the California myth is that it is almost as old as the concept of America itself. The name "California" first appeared in one of the chivalric romances which were a product of the Crusades. In 1510, Garcí Ordoñez de Montalvo wrote *Las Sergas de Esplandián* (*The Exploits of Esplandián*). In this romance, California was a fabulous island abounding in gold and ruled by a pagan, Queen Calafia. It was inhabited by griffins and dark Amazons, was located on the right hand of the Indies, and – just as the promotional writers of a century ago claimed – was very near to the terrestrial paradise. Cortés was so familiar with this

best-seller that he applied the name California to the mysterious and pearl-rich Baja peninsula, taking it to be an island.

However, age does not account for the durability of the legend. The book and the idea of an Isle of Griffins were almost completely forgotten till 1862, when Edward Everett Hale stumbled on them. He brought Montalvo to the attention of scholars in literature and history, but hardly to the ken of the public at large.

Francis Drake, whilst careening his weedy *Golden Hind* near modern San Francisco in 1579, began a new legend by claiming the coast as Nova Albion. The poet, John Dyer, tried vainly in 1757 to revive the idea, boastfully predicting in *The Fleece* that "We shall clothe the California coast and all the realms that stretch from Aníán's streight. . . ." But Captain Cook did not visit California and Vancouver came not to conquer. The myth of this particular New England proved to be a feeble one, barely kept alive by the place name added by patriotic British cartographers to maps of the Pacific shore.

Still, the myth or dream of a golden California is old – but in terms of United States history. The slowly-moving frontier suddenly leap-frogged the West of prairies, plains, Rockies, and basin and range country during the Gold Rush of 1848–49. Some of the men who hurried westward to make their pile, or to "see the Elephant" (to adventure, to satisfy their curiosity about what lay "way Out West"), pressed beyond as California, overnight, grew up like one of the fabulous 25-pound turnips of chamber of commerce propaganda. These men proceeded to double back and fill in the trans-Mississippi vacuum with ideas and machinery (from quartz stamp mills to Tustin's Benicia windmills) in a little-remarked, eastward trending, counter-frontier moving out from the Far West. California was drawn into this vacant center of the continent at the same time as the normal frontier procedure of Turner was operating from the Missouri River littoral. Thus, some of the early legend-making of California, which long preceded in statehood most of the other Western territories, was grafted onto the native mythic stock of these areas. However, its force was limited. For the power of the press lay in the East. Compared to the output from publishers there, California presses contributed but a trickle. And California, still provincial yet already chauvinistic in the 1860s and '70s,

concentrated on books about itself, not about the rest of the West. Thus, a book like Charles W. Dana's *The Garden of the World; or, The Great West* (1856) was, naturally, published in Boston; Albert Richardson's *Our New States and Territories* (1866) in New York; Frederick Goddard's *Where to Emigrate and Why; Homes and Fortunes in the Boundless West* (1869) in Philadelphia; Edward Hepple Hall's *The Great West* (1870) in London; and J. H. Beadle's *The Underdeveloped West* (18?) simultaneously in Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis.

The intensity of the impact on the world of California's myth is due less to its age than to its inherent potency; to the speed and pervasiveness of its dissemination; and particularly, to the dedication and skill of professional myth-makers. A few of these were painters, like Yosemite's Albert Bierstadt and Thomas Hill, or early photographers such as Eadweard Muybridge and Carleton Watkins. But most of them were writers.

Most of all, however, the awesome power of the legend of California has been due to the startling verisimilitude of the stereotypes. The myth of California was no mirage, but a vision. The legend was practically identical with reality, even if Pasadena author Margaret Collier Graham had her tongue in her cheek when she wrote (1912), "I have lived in California since 1876 and have, in consequence, no desire to go to Heaven."

End of Part One

The Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of The Book Club of California will be held at the Club rooms, 312 Sutter Street, Room 510, San Francisco, on Tuesday, March 18, at 11:30 a.m.

Gaye Kelly, Executive Director

Reviews

Collectible Books – Some New Paths. Edited by Jean Peters. New York: R. R. Bowker Company, 1979. 294pp. \$16.95.

This is an excellent companion to *Book Collecting – A Modern Guide* which Bowker published in 1977. The presentation of a series of essays on specific topics follows the format of the earlier volume. There is an introduction by William Matheson in which he comments on the information in the collective essays and an introductory chapter by Percy Muir which discusses this volume's great predecessor, *New Paths in Book Collecting* published in 1934.

The specific essays are "Non-Firsts" by G. Thomas Tanselle, "American Trade Bindings and Their Designs, 1880–1915" by Charles Gullans and John Espey, "Books in Series" by William B. Todd, "Film Books" by Daniel J. Leab, "American Mass-Market Paperbacks" by Thomas L. Bonn, "Photography as Book Illustration, 1839–1900" by Stuart Bennett, "Book Catalogues" by our own Wm. P. Barlow, Jr., "Publishers' Imprints" by Jean Peters, and "American Fiction Since 1960" by Peter B. Howard.

The most obvious question is, of course, whether "new paths" are still new once significant essays such as these are published about them. I know several collectors of American trade bindings, for instance, who have come to feel that the field is already overrun and overpriced. It is also inevitable that "new paths" can also be read as "currently popular" areas of book collecting. Yet the significance of these essays is twofold. A great deal of useful information is imparted about specific topics which will be of value to even the most advanced collectors, while beginning collectors are exposed to a wide range of new fields in which to pioneer collections.

The selection of the contributors was just as apt as it was for *Book Collecting*. Each of these enthusiastic and informative essays are by acknowledged experts in their fields. Peter Howard's essay is especially able and covers a wide range of material about a very complex subject deftly and clearly. After each essay in the book a list of Further Reading is given, a very useful feature. Mr. Howard's list in particular is admirably thorough and even lists unpublished dissertations.

In *Book Collecting – A Modern Guide* and *Collectible Books – Some New Paths* beginning and advanced collectors have at their fingertips the most comprehensive volumes to date on the subject of book collecting. No book collector should be without these two volumes.

D. Steven Corey

Gifts and Acquisitions

From our very regular donor, Club member and part-time Club employee Barbara Land, we have received two good reference books for our collection on type and type-founding. The first is a reprint of Henry Plomer's important work on *English Printer's Ornaments* and the second is *A Dissertation Upon English Typographical Founders and Founderies* (1778) with a catalogue and specimens of the typefoundry of John James (1782). Our thanks to Barbara for the valuable gifts and her continued support of the Club.

In the past quarter the Club has acquired several useful reference tools. The first is *Fournier* by Allen Hutt and published by Rowman and Litterfield, 1972. This dovetails nicely with our original *Fournier Manuel* which we reviewed in the *Quarterly* some time ago. The second is *Stanley Morison & D. B. Updike, Selected Correspondence* edited by David McKitterick, curator of the Morison archives at Cambridge, England. This was published by The Moretus Press in 1979 and designed and printed letterpress by Roderick Stinehour. The volume is a welcome addition to our small but good collection of the work of Morison and of Updike. A third recent acquisition happily includes an essay entitled "Book Catalogues" by our long-time Treasurer William P. Barlow, Jr. The title of the collection of these notable essays is *Collectible Books – Some New Paths*, edited by Jean Peters. Three other Californians are included in this interesting book: Peter B. Howard of Serendipity Books in Berkeley and Professors Charles Gullans and John Espey, both on the faculty of the English department at UCLA. Among the other contributors was the Englishman, Percy Muir, who died, we sadly note in passing, on November 24, three weeks before his eighty-fifth birthday. All of the contributions to the volume are of a very high calibre and we recommend it highly; see Mr. Corey's more extended review elsewhere in this issue.

The Club also acquired three more reference books for its excellent if small collection on stereotyping. *Stereotyping in Bavaria in the Sixteenth Century* by Douglas McMurtrie is a small booklet which illustrates a stereotyped map made in 1566. The other two are by George A. Kubler: *Historical Treatise, Abstracts & Papers on Stereotyping*, New York, 1936 and *The Era of Charles Mahon, Third Earl of Stanhope*, New York, 1938. This last work contains the controversy between Ged and Tilloch who had been granted a patent in 1784, before Stanhope.

The Stanford Libraries sent the Club a copy of their Annual Report for 1978–1979 which recorded some outstanding gifts and acquisitions. For example: Muybridge's own copy of *The Yosemite Guidebook*, 1871; a handsome early edition on *Short Hand* "brought to perfection," 1727; some exciting letters from T. E. Lawrence and Edward Lear; and a Papal Bull of Urban IV, 1262. The Annual Report is well printed and designed but it is regrettable that neither the designer nor the printer are noted.

More high marks go to Stanford for the catalogue of fifty prints of Paul Klee exhibited at the Stanford Museum from September 25 to November 4, 1979. Betsy Fryberger who was responsible for the exciting exhibit and Ann Rosener, the designer, are both respon-

Quarterly News-Letter

sible for this remarkable catalogue. Club members will remember their handsome Whistler exhibition catalogue about which we went overboard in a review several issues ago. This latest catalogue is equally outstanding in content and exciting in design.

We have acquired an unusual book on Thomas Bewick, *A Frail Memorial, being selections from the writings and engravings of Thomas Bewick*, selected by William Hesterberg and printed at the Cherryburn Press, our copy being number 72 of one hundred copies. This extraordinarily well designed and printed book contains a print from an original Bewick block, superbly matted.

Due to the generosity of member George H. Cabaniss, Jr., the Club is now the proud possessor of four books of particular importance to our collections. The first two were published by William Randolph Hearst in memory of his parents: *The Life and Personality of Phoebe Apperson Hearst*, 1928, and *The Life of George Hearst, California Pioneer*, 1933. Both of these matching volumes were printed by John Henry Nash using Cloister type and printed on handmade paper specially manufactured to his specifications with the additional watermarks of "Nash" and "Hearst" as well as the initials of the manufacturer, Van Gelder Zonen. The third book is *In Memoriam* for Charles Stetson Wheeler in 1924, also printed by John Henry Nash. The other epic gift from Mr. Cabaniss are the three noble volumes of *The Plan of St. Gall* by Walter Horn and Ernest Born and published by the University of California Press in 1979. This incredibly brilliant work on the architecture and society of the period, and the historical significance of a planned utopian monastic community in the age of Charlemagne, is an amazing example of the scholarship, both professional and recreational, of these two great authorities. The three volumes are bound in a durable natural white buckram and the volumes themselves are exceptionally well printed and designed. There are some one thousand illustrations of which two hundred and fifty are in color or with color overlays. This set is perhaps the finest example of modern bookmaking that we have seen. A "must" for any library and for any serious scholar, student, or collector.

And with all this, Toni Savage has sent us five more of his now-famous Phoenix Broad-sheets, numbers 169 to 173. And that's not all. He has also included four booklets: *Venice/Easter* 1979, a poem and drawing by Kathie Layfield and printed in an edition of eighty copies of which ours is number 36; *A Fifty-Year Span*, poems by Arthur Caddick with drawings by the incredible Rigby Graham, one hundred twenty copies of which ours is number 73; *New Oceans to Explore* by David Rogers with drawings by Hans Erni, number 94 of one hundred copies; and *Twelve Poems that Made December Colder* by Spike Milligan, again with drawings by Rigby Graham, number 78 of ninety copies. All of these booklets are very well printed, two of them in two colors. Our continuing thanks to Toni and his friends.

Albert Sperisen

Serendipity

We are saddened to announce the passing on January 25, 1980 of Margaret Baker (Maggie) Harrison, well-known bookbinder and wife of our long-time member and former President Michael Harrison.

A Matter of Taste, our Spring 1979 publication, and *From Kapuvar to California*, our Fall 1979 publication, were accepted by the Rounce and Coffin Club for inclusion in the 1980 Western Books Exhibition. The exhibit will be on display at the Club rooms from March 1 through March 31, 1980.

Eastward the Armies, selected poems by William Everson with five linoleum prints executed by artist Tom Killion, will be appearing the summer of 1980 published by Labyrinth Editions.

The poems are hand composed in 18-point Centaur with the introduction and interview text being set in 12-point Monotype Centaur. The printing has been done on a Vandercook proof press. Each poem is given a full page spread. The edition, signed by both the poet and the artist, is limited to fifty Roman numeraled deluxe copies on Japanese handmade Hosho and two hundred numbered copies printed on Japanese Masa. Both editions include a slip case. Price is \$165 per numbered copy and \$325 per deluxe copy. To place your order, please write Labyrinth Editions, 463 Townsend Dr., Aptos, CA 95003.

Many of our readers will be pleased to learn of the first World Ephemera Congress which will be held in London, September 8-13, 1980. The Congress is sponsored by Sotheby Parke Bernet & Co., and organized by the Ephemera Society and will be held in the conference suite of the new Kensington Town Hall, London. The Congress will provide an opportunity for an intensive review of ephemera studies on a world scale. There will be comprehensive lecture and discussion coverage, with participation by ephemerists at all levels. There will also be an Ephemera Fair, an Award Show, and a major international Ephemera Auction. Readers are invited to write the World Ephemera Congress, Conference Centre, 3 Bute Street, London SW7 3EY, England for further information.

Not a Station but a Place published by Synergistic Press is a collection of drawings, collages, and written notes, some done on menus, by Club member Judith Clancy Johns. The book has twenty-four drawings and four collages relating to the Gare de Lyon, the Paris station from which trains leave for Italy and the South of France. The introduction has been written by M. F. K. Fisher, the noted author. The book measures 8 1/2 by 11 with 72 pages. A limited edition of 250 copies with slip case, signed and numbered by the artist and author, is priced at \$25 plus appropriate sales tax. The book is also available in hardbound and paperback editions. For further information please write Synergistic Press, 3965 Sacramento Street, San Francisco 94118.

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